

Tips for Talking to Healthcare Professionals

Before you go to your doctor or other healthcare provider:

- Make a list of your questions, symptoms and concerns — ask a friend to help.
- Ask a family member or friend to accompany you to your appointment.

If the results of medical tests won't be ready for a few days:

- Ask your doctor if your results will be mailed to you or if you should expect a phone call.
- Ask who will be available to explain the results to you.

If you need to ask questions later:

- Find out who to call in your healthcare provider's office, and the best times to call

Questions About My Disease or Disorder...

- What is my diagnosis?
- What caused my condition?
- Can my condition be treated?
- How will this condition affect my vision now and in the future?
- Should I watch for any particular symptoms and notify you if they occur?
- Should I make any lifestyle changes?

Questions About My Treatment...

- What is the treatment for my condition?
- When will the treatment start, and how long will it last?
- What are the benefits of this treatment, and how successful is it?
- What are the risks and side effects associated with this treatment?

- Are there foods, drugs, or activities I should avoid while I'm on this treatment?
- If my treatment includes taking a medication, what should I do if I miss a dose?
- Are other treatments available?

Questions About My Tests...

- What kinds of tests will I have?
- What do you expect to find out from these tests?
- When will I know the results?
- Do I have to do anything special to prepare for any of the tests?
- Do these tests have any side effects or risks?
- Will I need more tests later?

Understanding your doctor's responses is essential to good communication. Here are a few more tips:

- If you don't understand your doctor's responses, ask questions until you do understand.
- Take notes, or get a friend or family member to take notes for you. Or, bring a tape-recorder to assist in your recollection of the discussion.
- Ask your doctor to write down his or her instructions to you.
- Ask your doctor for printed material about your condition.
- If you still have trouble understanding your doctor's answers, ask where you can go for more information.

Other members of your health care team, such as nurses and pharmacists, can be good sources of information. Talk to them, too.